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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY BOYCOTT OVER, OPPOSITION STILL
AWAITING MEETING WITH KABILA

REF: KINSHASA 440

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Deputies from two parliamentary opposition groups, including Senator Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), ended their walk-out of the National Assembly April 24-25. Initially promised a meeting with President Joseph Kabila, opposition leaders have met only with presidential advisers to prepare for an as-yet unspecified encounter. They say they have received no indication from the presidency such a meeting is forthcoming. A third opposition group continues to suspend its participation in the Assembly's plenary. End summary.

¶2. (U) Members of the opposition Christian Democrats (CD) returned to the National Assembly on April 24, and MLC secretary general Thomas Luhaka announced his party's return

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April 25 to end a boycott initiated April 13 following a spate of late-night visits by armed, uniformed men to the homes of deputies primarily aligned with the opposition (reftel). Opposition leaders demanded that President Kabila address their concerns and publicly condemn the attacks. The Order of Republican Democrats (ODR), the third member of the opposition coalition, is continuing its boycott until meeting with Kabila.

¶3. (U) Leaders of all three groups met with senior presidency advisers April 26. They initially had expected to meet with Kabila. Instead, they were received by Minister of State to the Presidency Norbert Nkulu and Kabila advisers Marcellin Cishambo and Samba Kaputo. (Kabila was presiding at a two-day session of the Council of Ministers at the time.) Luhaka, who participated in the meeting, said the two sides discussed potential agenda items for a future meeting with Kabila, including the release of political prisoners and the question of a possible judicial procedures against Bemba.

¶4. (SBU) MLC parliamentarian and Bemba adviser Delly Sesanga, another meeting participant, told us May 8 that opposition deputies have not received any word from the presidency regarding a future presidential encounter. He said that since April 26 they have not had any contact with Kabila's advisers. Sesanga assured us, however, the MLC would remain in the National Assembly but continue to press for a meeting with Kabila.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The lack of a timely follow-up Kabila meeting is indicative of the relatively slow and rather disordered process as new political and power relationships are being defined. Nonetheless, there is an ongoing process. The opposition walk-out temporarily bolstered an image of

opposition cohesiveness, but its piecemeal return to the Assembly underscores its overall fragility. From his perch in Portugal, former VP Bemba was seeking to maintain the boycott but failed against prevailing counter-pressure from the Kinshasa MPs. In practical terms, the boycott was purely symbolic as the Assembly failed to consider any legislation during that time. The incident is bound to influence debate over forthcoming legislation, drafted by the MLC, concerning the rights and status of the opposition. End comment.

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